

## **MONTANA STATE LIBRARY COLLECTION MANAGEMENT POLICY GUIDELINES**

Collection management policies, considered and formally adopted by governing entities, are a prerequisite to maintaining a useful materials collection. In addition, the [Public Library Standards for Montana](#) now require all public libraries to have current and approved collection management policies in order to qualify for state funding (see Section 10.102.1150H, #1a). The Montana State Library Commission also requires that any library applying for grant funds must have a formal collection management policy on file at Montana State Library.

Collection management policies submitted to Montana State Library are reviewed by Library Development Division staff and either approved or returned for revision. A policy must be reviewed and updated at least every three years and resubmitted in its entirety to Montana State Library for review and approval. Below are guidelines developed to help librarians write collection management policies. The State Library expects that each of the sections in the guidelines will be addressed in policies submitted for review.

Collection management policies should describe how the library collection serves its users, where the strengths and weaknesses are, how the collection relates to those in other local libraries, and what the goals are for the development of the collection. At the end of the guidelines, there is a list of resources on writing collection management policies.

The policy should be written for the library staff, the library board, the governing organization, and the patrons of the library. It should both guide the collection management activities and explain those activities and the results to others. The collection management policy should not be static, but should frequently be reviewed and changed to reflect changes in the library's goals and in the collection itself.

The length of the policy varies with the complexity of the collection and of the community of users it serves. Each category listed in the guidelines below is important and should be addressed, at least to the extent appropriate for your library. Statements within each category may vary from one sentence to several paragraphs. The questions and statements within each section of the guidelines are for your guidance in considering the library's situation and in writing a policy that will prove to be useful.

# Collection Management Policy Guidelines

## A. INTRODUCTION

1. Mission Statement: What is the library's reason for existence? What is the library's role in the community? The mission of the governing organization or parent institution may also be included.
2. Purpose of the Policy: How will the policy be used for library management, planning, and accountability to the governing organization and library users?
3. Community and User Groups Defined: Describe the community served (town, county, school, business, etc.) in terms of size, population, location, economic base, etc. Describe the primary, secondary and occasional users of the library in terms of age, education level, occupation, number, frequency of use, reasons for use, etc.
4. Patron Needs and Services/Programs Defined: What educational, recreational, and/or research needs must be met? Consider the needs of children, students, senior citizens, teachers, government officials, special needs patrons, business owners, and other segments of the population. What services and/or programs does the library offer to meet these needs (children's programs, homebound service, literacy tutoring, online database searching, interlibrary loan, etc.)? What needs are not being met?
5. General Statement Describing the Collection: In general, how would you describe the library's collection? What is the size (in volumes or titles)? How much does it grow each year? What reading or information levels (preschool, school, adult, technical/professional) are collected?
6. Cooperative Collection Management & Interlibrary Loan: How does use of interlibrary loan affect collection decisions? What cooperative agreements, if any, are in place? Do you have deposit collection arrangements with other libraries, classroom teachers, the jail, nursing homes, etc.? Are the holdings of other libraries in WorldCat or within the area considered before a title is purchased? Under what circumstances?

## B. GENERAL PRIORITIES, LIMITATIONS AND POLICIES

1. Chronological Coverage: What are the publication dates of the titles in the collection? Do you have mostly current information? Are older publications kept for historical or research purposes? Distinguish between older material intentionally retained and material that needs to be withdrawn.
2. Formats: Describe which formats of information the library collects: books, periodicals, newspapers, DVDs, books on tape, videotapes, software, CDs, online databases, etc. Are paperbacks, textbooks, large print, or electronic formats purchased or collected? Under what circumstances and to what extent? Is there a need to collect in a format you don't yet have?
3. Multiple Copies: Does the library normally purchase multiple copies of books or other items? How is the determination made to purchase or place duplicates in the collection? Are multiple copies available for book clubs?

4. Languages: Is material collected in languages other than English? Which languages? What materials? Examples:

- Maintain collection of adult and juvenile Spanish fiction.
- Collect classic French and German literature to support undergraduate courses.

5. Funding Considerations: How are funds for materials obtained and allocated? Are funds obtained from any special sources, such as a trust fund, donation fund, friends group, or grants? Are funding formulas tied to enrollment? How does the budget change from year to year? Where do operating funds come from – city, county, state?

6. Collection Responsibilities and Selection Procedures: Who selects materials? What general processes or procedures are involved? What criteria are used for selection?

**NOTE:** The library's existing selection policy describing the procedures and policies for adding materials to the collection could be added to the collection management policy.

7. Gifts Policy: Do you accept gifts? What do you add to the collection? How do you dispose of unwanted gifts? Do you accept gifts with special restrictions? Do you accept monetary gifts or bequests? Who makes the decisions about gifts?

**NOTE:** Libraries should not appraise materials; receipts for donors should only be for the number of items donated and not for any monetary value.

8. Collection Maintenance: Why, when and by what criteria do you withdraw or weed items? Policies concerning rebinding, repair and replacements should be included in this section.

Examples:

- outdated information
- materials in poor physical condition
- unneeded duplicates
- subject not within scope of collection management policy

9. Complaints and Censorship: Include the full procedure, policy and forms used by the library. The [Library Bill of Rights](#) and [Freedom to Read Statement](#) and any other relevant policies can be cited in this section and appended to the collection management policy.

### C. SUBJECT AREAS COLLECTED

1. Subjects: The details in this section will depend on the size and needs of the library. Three common approaches to describing subject areas are mentioned below. Choose or adapt the one most relevant to your library. Be as general or as specific as needed to be to have useful information for development of the collection.

a. Broad categories:

History	Science & Technology	Curriculum areas
Social Sciences	Literature	
General Reference	Religion	

b. Broad classification number categories:

Dewey Decimal Classification  
000's  
100's  
200's

Library of Congress Classification

A's

B's

C's

c. Specific classification number categories:

Dewey Decimal Classification

900-909 History

910, 914-919 Travel

910-912, 914-919 Geography

913 Archaeology

Library of Congress Classification

E51-99 Indians of North America

E101-135 Discovery & exploration of America

E186-199 Colonial history

E201-298 Revolution

2. Present Collection Levels: Within each of the subject categories established in #1 above, give a brief description of the current collection level. Include all formats (books, periodicals, audiovisual, government publications, etc.) in your description and an assessment of each subject area. Three possible ways to describe collection levels are given below:

a. At the minimum, give some indication of the strengths and weaknesses of your collection in each subject area. Examples:

- The library does not collect in this area.
- Have current reference sources, 10-15 circulating books, but all are more than 25 years old.

b. You may combine brief descriptions with standard collection level descriptions:

Out of scope: the library does not collect in this subject.

Minimal level: have a few good items.

Basic level: have an up-to-date collection that will introduce readers to the subject and indicate the varieties of information available elsewhere.

Study level: have a collection adequate to support undergraduate instruction & sustained independent study. Includes material at all appropriate reading levels.

Research level: includes all the major published source material required for dissertation research.

c. If your library has used a conspectus methodology to assess the collection, you may choose to use the following collection depth indicator codes/levels:

0 = Out of scope; library does not collect in this subject.

1 = Minimal information level: very limited collection of general resources.  
This code includes uneven and focused coverage of a subject.

2 = Basic Information level: collection supports the needs of general library users through first two years of college. This code can be further defined by introductory or advanced level.

3 = Study or instructional support level: collection provides information in a systematic way and supports the needs of general library users through college. This code can be further defined by basic, intermediate, or advanced level.

4 = Research level: collection contains the major published source materials required for graduate study and independent research.

5 = Comprehensive level: collection goal is to be exhaustive as far as is reasonably possible.

3. Future acquisition levels or goals: Again, within each subject area in #1 above, indicate needs and goals for each subject. How do you intend to change the collection? What are your priorities? Within what time frame? If the area needs weeding or other specific action, that may also be a goal. Examples:

- Weed science & technology collection by \_\_\_\_\_ (date).
- Upgrade medical section from minimal to basic level by \_\_\_\_\_ (date).
- Work toward study level for local history collection.
- Priorities are local history, current fiction, and business (adult collection) and support for summer reading program (children's collection.)

4. Special collections: Describe any subject areas or format collections that the library maintains as a strong or unique collection. These may be materials that are shelved separately or that do not circulate (rare books on the history of skiing, local history collection, etc.).

5. Attachments: Attach any policies, appendices and forms mentioned throughout the policy. Examples:

- Complaint form/policy
- Selection policy

## D. POLICY IMPLEMENTATION, EVALUATION, AND REVISION

1. Implementation: The policy needs to be officially adopted by the library's governing authority and this action should be recorded in the minutes of an official meeting. The record of action should be included at the end of the policy with signatures and dates of the appropriate individuals.

Examples:

a. For a public library

_____ Librarian	_____ Date
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_____ Chair, Board of Trustees	_____ Date
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b. For a school library

_____ Librarian	_____ Date
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_____ Administrator	_____ Date
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_____ Chair, Board of Education	_____ Date
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2. Evaluation: Regularly schedule an evaluation of the collection management policy by the director and board to insure the policy reflects current goals and collection status.

3. Revision: How, when and by whom will the policy be reviewed and updated? The policy needs to be specific about the revision plans. Examples:

- Every June by the librarian and trustees.
- Every two years, beginning in 1990, by the library-faculty committee.

**NOTE:** Montana State Library requires that collection management policies be reviewed and updated, with the current board chair/legal authority's and director/librarian's signatures, at least once every three years. The new policy is then resubmitted in its entirety to the State Library for review.

## WRITING COLLECTION MANAGEMENT POLICIES FOR CONSORTIA/GROUPS

Some groups/federations/consortia may create collection development policies. These policies should contain all the guidelines of a regular policy and also address:

- Priorities
- Management and accountability for collection
- Goals
- Possible areas of development, including justification for inclusion of these areas
- How will resources be shared, will they be shared outside the group



## RESOURCES FOR WRITING COLLECTION MANAGEMENT POLICIES

1. Montana State Library's [Online Collection Development class](#) is divided into six parts and includes information on writing a collection management policy, collection assessment, weeding, selection, and intellectual freedom. It is self-paced and can be done at any time. There are interactive components designed to give you a chance to apply collection development theory to practice.
2. Sample policies are available for review: one from a small [public library](#) and one from a [school library](#). Montana State Library thanks these libraries for allowing us to post the policies for others to see.
3. [\*The CREW Method: Expanded Guidelines for Collection Evaluation and Weeding for Small and Medium-Sized Public Libraries\*](#), Texas State Library.
4. For information about the conspectus method of assessment see: [\*Using the Conspectus Method: a Collection Assessment Handbook\*](#), by Mary Bushing, available through ILL from the State Library.
5. The Library Development [resource collection](#) at Montana State Library includes titles on collection development and collection development policies. These titles can be located on the Montana Shared Catalog from the MSL web page.
6. If you have questions as you work on your collection management policy, contact the Library Development Division staff at Montana State Library 1-800-338-5087.